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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PM](#) [EPET](#) [ECON](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: VICE PRESIDENT'S SENIOR SPECIAL ASSISTANT
SEES PROGRESS IN BRINGING PEACE TO THE NIGER DELTA

REF: A. LAGOS 449

[1](#)B. LAGOS 446

[1](#)C. LAGOS 440

Classified By: Ambassador Robin R. Sanders for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Senior Special Assistant to the Vice President Oronto Douglas (strictly protect throughout) told Pol-Econ Chief November 22 that Delta State Governor Uduaghan, with the support of the Vice President, has brought peace to the troubled Warri South and Burutu local Government Areas (LGAs); that Bayelsa Governor Silva has obtained the agreement of the South-South Governors to coordinate their activities with respect to militants; and that Rivers State Governor Amaechi had made great strides in improving education, skills training and rural agriculture in the State. Newly elected Action Congress Governor Adams Oshiomhole has been "well received" by the South-South Governors, who recognize his standing earned as a national labor leader and as the recipient of popular support in his state. President Yar'Adua has promised to implement swiftly the recommendations of the Electoral Reform Commission and the Niger Delta Technical Committee, both expected to issue in December; and the allocation for the Niger Delta, relative to the allocation for the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), in the new budget is more important than whomever is chosen to head the new Niger Delta Ministry, according to Douglas. Discussions in Abuja about amnesty have not yet resulted in a policy, or even a decision to have a policy, but a consensus is emerging that criminals will be distinguished from militants by whether they have committed murder, kidnapping for ransom, or some other crime against persons; distinctions will be drawn based "on intelligence", Douglas said. (Note: Mission has reported what appears to be increased intelligence gathering activities by the military Joint Task Force (JTF)(Refs), as has the press. End Note) Former Economic and Financial Crimes (EFCC) Chairman Ribadu's problems result from "police politics" not presidential mandate, according to Douglas. Although Douglas paints a picture that is, as he describes it, "cautiously optimistic", it is clear that he is well aware of the many challenges that must be overcome before the Niger Delta crisis is resolved. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Pol-Econ Chief met on November 22 with Oronto Douglas (strictly protect throughout), Senior Special Assistant to the Vice President for Research, Documentation and Strategy during a visit by Douglas to Lagos. Douglas noted that the President's deliberate approach to the Niger Delta had begun

to pay off. He noted that the President believes that there must be dialogue over the issues in the Niger Delta. In concert with that dialogue, there must be a process to sort out the criminal elements from the ordinary people who are not engaged in criminal acts.

Uduaghan Brings Peace to Two Troubled LGAs

13. (C) The situation in Delta State has come along nicely; there is scarcely any problem at the present time, Douglas said. Governor Uduaghan, with the support of the Federal Government through the Vice President, has adopted a strategy of engagement and inclusion. There are two Local Government Areas, Warri South and Burutu, that have had serious problems in the past. In 1997, there were a series of violent clashes in the Warri South LGA between the Itsekiri and the Ijaws, the Urhobos and the Itsekiri and the Ijaws and the Urhobos. The majority of the population in that LGA is Ijaw, he said. Therefore, Governor Uduaghan, who is himself of the Itsekiri ethnicity, arranged that the LGA Chairman be an Ijaw man, while the Vice Chairman is an Itsekiri. Other positions were arranged with a similar ethnic balance, he said. The candidate for the Chairmanship happened to be Government Ekpemupolo's (Tom Polo) brother, George. In light of the history of ethnic violence, and in part because he is Tom Polo's brother, the South Warri LGA chairman is very aware that he must perform in the position and bring development to the community. In the second LGA, the Burutu LGA, the Chairman is Frank Izukumor, a well-educated individual who was put forward by the people of the community. His candidacy was then backed by the Governor and by Tom Polo. This backing, by the people, the Governor and Tom Polo, gives this LGA Chairman the freedom to focus on development for his people, not on illicitly "sharing" the funds which pass through his hands. Delta Governor Uduaghan himself took charge of establishing peace in these two previously troublesome LGAs.

14. (C) Pol-Econ Chief noted that Chevron had been attacked in the last week, and asked how Douglas interpreted that. Douglas said that he was not clear where the attacks took place, but he believes that they did not take place in Delta State. There are bound to be renegades in any peace deal, he said. Governor Uduaghan is to be commended, Douglas said; he has performed in the face of great pressure and has achieved peace in his state.

Bayelsa Governor Promotes Common Strategy for Peace

15. (C) Douglas has spoken with Von Kemedi, who is on Governor Silva's staff. From what he knows from Von, the Governor has adopted a policy of persuasion, and is attempting to get the militants to forsake militant activity and come on board. Some of the militants have agreed. Governor Silva has also taken the initiative to organize the Governors of the South-South geopolitical zone to coordinate their efforts to bring peace; they can't all have different approaches, Silva believes. At a meeting held in Yenagoa during the week of November 17, the Governors agreed to take a common approach so as to tackle the problem of criminality in their states. They will begin to work out the details through their Secretaries to the State Governments, Douglas surmised.

Rivers State Scores High on Development

16. (C) Asked how he views developments in Rivers State, Douglas said he sees the Governor as scoring very high in promoting education. To date, the Governor has sent 600 people out of the state to pursue college and masters degrees. Douglas has spoken with the Governor's wife about the work of her non-governmental organization (NGO), the Education Support Initiative. The NGO is building nursery schools throughout the state. She believes that by beginning early to give children a proper education, their success in

later life is assured and militancy can be avoided. The schools also benefit the parents, especially women, who are free to go about fishing or farming activities while children three to five are in school. To find teachers to staff the nursery schools, the Governor's wife sent a message to every village asking for nominations of individuals with the requisite education and skills to staff the preschools. The nominees were all sent to two months of Montessori training.

17. (C) Governor Amaechi has excelled in another area, that of skills training, Douglas said. Like Bayelsa Governor Silva, Governor Amaechi has already sent out 60 youths to India for training in information technology (IT). The Governor has also made a concerted effort to improve the road system in the state. To improve rural agriculture, he has appointed a former Shell Director to head his Rivers State Agricultural Development Board. The Governor is under considerable pressure from former Governor Peter Odili, who wants Amaechi out of the way, whether through judicial challenges or as a result of failure to perform, by 2011, Douglas said. As a result, Amaechi sees his best chance in a strategy that gets the support of the masses, not the elites, behind him.

Challenges to Akwa Ibom, Cross River Tourism

18. (C) Douglas said that, in his opinion, Akwa Ibom (AI) was doing very well; of the South-South states, AI is the only state in which the German construction firm Julius Berger has continued to work. The planned cargo airport in Uyo is under construction, and the tourism corridor between the new 5-star Le Meridian resort in Uyo, and the Tinapa shopping area in Calabar in Cross River is a good idea, Douglas said. (Note: Econoff, visiting Calabar during the week of November 17, noted that Tinapa was open and several shops doing business. End Note) However, the road between the two locations is now impassable; in addition to repair, it will have to be dualized in order to make it an effective means of transportation between the two locations. Even that alone will not be sufficient to jump-start tourism, he said. The area will still have to be connected to the large population centers in the more easterly parts of the country.

Among the ways to do that, he said, could be to extend a rail line from Aba, in Abia State, to Uyo, in Akwa Ibom. A second major consideration in generating tourism is assuring security. If Calabar and Uyo experience a tourism boom, they will attract criminals; security must be bolstered in both places. That is why it is essential that the entire South-South be secure in order for the individual areas to develop, Douglas said.

Edo AC Governor "Well Received" by PDP Colleagues

19. (C) Asked how he thinks the new Action Congress (AC) Governor, Adams Oshiomhole, will work with the other South-South Governors, all of whom are from the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Douglas said that "party is just a label" with no ideological underpinnings. As a result, PDP Governors will have no problem working with Oshiomhole. Oshiomhole has a national support base, owing to his years as a national labor leader. Moreover, he has a truly popular mandate, Douglas said. Both elements assure him of the respect of his PDP governor colleagues. At the meeting of South-South Governors held in Yenagoa during the week of November 17, Oshiomhole was well received, he said. Nonetheless, Oshiomhole will not have a big purse to work with, not because of anything the former PDP Governor Oserhemen Osunbor did, but because of the actions of former governor Lucky Igbenedion. The state is still paying back loans from that era, Douglas said. That will make it difficult for Oshiomhole to deliver on his campaign promises to provide services to the people such as free education and health care. Douglas said he did his National Youth Service in Edo State, where he set up his first NGO, the Environmental Rights Action group, and knows the state well. Edo State is plagued with north-south tensions, he said.

Ogba, in the south-west, has oil, and that has generated conflicts with the Benin monarch. However, Douglas said, Oshiomhole is an activist and his activism will carry people along with him. In addition, Oshiomhole will no doubt want a second term, so he will need to produce results in order to be reelected.

Niger Delta Budget More Important Than Minister Pick

¶10. (C) Pol-Econ Chief asked Douglas what he was hearing about who would be the new Minister for the Niger Delta. "The President plays things close to his chest", Douglas said. Unlike the Chairman of the Niger Delta Development Committee (NDDC), the Minister does not have to come from the Niger Delta. More important than who is appointed minister, he said, is how much money is in the budget for the Niger Delta, and how that amount compares with the amount allocated to the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Having just returned from a brief vacation, he will be scrutinizing the budget to determine that in the upcoming week. Key projects include the Warri to Akwa Ibom road, for which funding was so long delayed under the previous regime. Now that Julius Berger has returned to work, the road must be completed, he said. The Niger Delta Technical Committee report, which may issue during the first week in December, may require submission of a supplemental budget request, he said.

¶11. (C) Despite the advances made by individual governors, development in the Niger Delta states is going more slowly than anyone desires, Douglas said. Douglas is confident, however, that by 2011 the governors will have stanching all militant activities and achieved their development goals. The runup to the 2011 elections is likely to be a distraction, Douglas said; things are unlikely to change completely in the space of one election cycle, he said. Despite this fact, Douglas himself is a "cautious optimist". One reason for his optimism is that the Election Reform Committee is due to submit its report to the President in December, and the President has promised to implement swiftly those recommendations related to the Presidency and Executive Branch over which he has control. In addition, he thinks that the "right message" is getting through and will assure that change is inevitable.

¶12. (C) Another reason to be optimistic is that the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta will submit its report to the Presidency soon, probably during the first week of December, Douglas said. Although he has not seen a draft of the report, he met recently with Ledum Mittee, the Chairman of the Technical Committee, who was finalizing the draft. The President will move swiftly on the Committee recommendations to the Presidency and other Federal Government agencies. However, recommendations that require amendment of the Constitution will fall within the purview of the legislative branch, he said.

Distinguishing Militants From Criminals for Amnesty

¶13. (C) Pol-Econ Chief drew Douglas back to his earlier point, and asked how he would go about distinguishing militants from criminals. He characterized the militants into three categories: 1) Conscientious militants, driven by ideology and interested in the survival of their communities and their people; 2) Sympathetic, aligned, or opportunistic militants, who had worked for the discredited governors or other politicians, then when they realized the political game was over, adopted the name militant; and finally 3) Criminals who style themselves militants. Pol-Econ Chief pressed Douglas to indicate how one could possibly distinguish between the three categories. "Through intelligence gathering", he said. (Note: Although Douglas did not expand on this point, Poloffs have reported what appears to be increased intelligence gathering activities on the part of the JTF. (Refs) In addition, the Saturday, November 22 Guardian reported "A new security approach, which entails the secret monitoring of families suspected to have links with

militants" is causing tension in some Delta State LGAs. End Note) There are fewer and fewer conscientious militants, he said. Whether they engage in kidnapping is an essential criterion for distinguishing between the three groups, he said.

¶14. (C) Pol-Econ Chief asked whether the Federal government is considering granting amnesty to militants. Douglas said that some discussion have already been held in Abuja about amnesty, and a consensus is emerging around three principles.

First, amnesty is appropriate for a person who gives up his arms, eschews violence and is reintegrated into society. Second, that person must not have committed murder, kidnapping for ransom, or other act which causes harm to persons. If a person were to give up his arms, but later be found to have been engaged in hostage taking, for example, that individual would be tried in a court of law. A fair trial would provide him with the opportunity to defend himself against the allegations. Third, the individual must not have been a mastermind or ringleader of a murder, kidnapping or other act against persons. Douglas cautioned that there as yet no decision has been taken with respect to amnesty, nor is there a policy; these three points are just those which have come forward in the context of discussions about how best to establish a just and enduring peace.

Ribadu's Troubles "Police Politics"

¶15. (C) Douglas commented that the Vice President had been present at the National Institute for Policy Strategic Studies (NIPSS) graduation from which former Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Chairman Nuhu Ribadu had been excluded. The actual exclusion took place before the Vice President's arrival, but the VP has asked Douglas to look into the matter on his behalf. Ribadu's plight is the result of "police politics", Douglas averred, and is not driven by the Presidency.

¶16. (C) Comment: The issue of what to do about the militants appears to be taking the same slow trajectory as other issues related to the Niger Delta. According to Douglas, the commission of crimes against persons, as opposed to attacks on pipelines and other oil installations, is being considered as the litmus test for distinguishing between criminals and militants. In light of the in camera prosecution of Henry Okah for treason, it would appear that the government considers the importation and sale of guns either to militants or criminals as treasonous. Sales of military weapons by the military to militants or criminals are also being handled in camera by courts martial, with severe penalties being handed out. How these distinctions will apply to well-known militant commanders is as yet unclear. Although Douglas paints a picture that is, as he describes it, "cautiously optimistic", it is clear that he is well aware of the many challenges that must be overcome before the Niger Delta crisis is resolved.

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